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SUBJECT: DFM KARASIN WARNS AGAINST US PARTICIPATION IN EU
MISSION IN GEORGIA

REF: MOSCOW 1873

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a discussion July 28 that covered Georgia, Central Asia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, and VP Biden's WSJ interview, DFM Grigoriy Karasin expressed strong opposition to the idea of U.S. forces participating in the renewed EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, calling the idea "surprising, dangerous and provocative." Russia now recognized the merit of the Geneva process, but still did not believe it should continue indefinitely, and stressed that Georgia should recognize it needs to use the meetings to talk directly to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, rather than to Russia. He welcomed the Ambassador's points that U.S. military assistance for Georgia was focused on defense reform and modernization. He appreciated U/S Burns' debrief on his Central Asia trip and Beyrle's follow-up, and said the U.S. and Russia should be transparent and not seek to compete in the region.

¶2. (C) Expressing concern at reports that "some in DC" were characterizing the 7/17 Moscow meeting on Nagorno-Karabakh as not successful, Karasin said that while there were no breakthroughs, it was positive that the Azeri and Armenian Presidents were now constructively discussing the issue of a referendum, and had agreed for the first time to let an OSCE high-level group visit the Lachin Corridor. On Ukraine, Karasin said he hoped the just-commenced visit of Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill would help the extremist parties to calm down. While noting that the Vice Presidents statements about Kiev's Euro-Atlantic aspirations seemed "well-balanced," Karasin said the VP's Wall Street Journal article had been negatively viewed in Moscow and put in question the U.S. commitment to improving U.S.-Russian relations. End summary.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Beyrle met with DFM Karasin July 27 to follow up on U/S Burns' telephone debrief on his Central Asia trip. Karasin immediately raised the Vice President's Wall Street Journal article, stressing that it been viewed very negatively in Moscow ("Russians are emotional people") and undercut the commitment of the U.S. to reset the relationship. The Ambassador highlighted the White House press statement, reiterating that the U.S. sought a strong, peaceful and prosperous Russia, and that the President and VP believed Russia would cooperate with the U.S. out of self-interest, not weakness.

Georgia - EUMM Renewal Good

¶4. (C) Karasin said Moscow welcomed the renewal of the mandate for the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia, saying the EU was performing a useful function and Russia had

developed a good working relationship with them in the past year. He noted that the EU "couldn't help but include" the phrase "territorial integrity of Georgia," but said this was useful since the EUMM's mandate was to work "in Georgia," not in Abkhazia or South Ossetia. He said EU Commissioner Heidi Tagliavinni would deliver her report to Moscow on July 29, but Russia supported her decision to delay issuance of the report until after the August 8 anniversary of the beginning of the conflict. The media would "make a fuss" about the anniversary, but we should all "stick to common sense."

But Possibility of U.S. Participation Dangerous

15. (C) Karasin expressed strong opposition to the idea of U.S. forces participating in the EUMM, calling it "very surprising, dangerous and provocative." He said Tbilisi still believed the U.S. military should confront the Russian military on the Georgia/Abkhazia and Georgia/South Ossetia boundary lines, and cautioned that if U.S. participation "led to confrontation between U.S. and Russian forces on the boundary, it could have very serious consequences." He said it could lead to "a deep abyss," and "this idea should be buried before it starts." What was needed now in the South Caucasus was stability and an actual non-use of force approach, even if Russia's preferred option of a formal NUF agreement between Georgia and the two enclaves could not be reached. Ambassador Beyrle agreed the renewal of the EUMM mandate was positive, but lamented that Russia had blocked renewal of the UN and OSCE missions as well. He stressed that the U.S. had not been asked to participate in the EUMM,

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but if we were asked and decided to participate, Moscow should not overreact, but see it simply as a desire to promote stability.

IPRM and Geneva Process

16. (C) Ambassador Beyrle expressed appreciation for Karasin's efforts to bring Georgia and Abkhazia together on the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) and urged him to continue to try to persuade South Ossetian authorities to engage also. He repeated the importance the U.S. places on the Geneva talks as a forum for dialogue among all the parties.

17. (C) Karasin agreed the June 14 IPRM meeting had been positive and hoped the July 28 meeting would be also. Moscow hoped the EU would be successful in getting South Ossetia to participate in the IPRM prior to the next round of Geneva talks but noted the SO authorities were now very concerned about what would happen to the five "hostages" taken by Georgia during the conflict last year.

18. (C) Karasin said that whereas Russia had been skeptical about the Geneva process earlier this year, it now believed the talks were a useful mechanism since they brought all the parties together and it gave the Abkhaz and South Ossetians the opportunity to get more used to each other. However, Moscow still did not believe the talks should continue indefinitely. He stressed that Georgia needed to stop using them to talk directly to Russia, but to focus on discussing issues with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Otherwise, the talks would fail. He added that if Abkhazia and South Ossetia began to think that the talks and the IPRM were only being used to put pressure on them and to attain Georgia's goals, they would walk out. Karasin said that Moscow had shrugged off references to Russia's "occupation" of the two territories, but noted that they were not helpful. He said it would be useful to discuss the issues with A/S Gordon prior to the next Geneva meeting.

19. (C) The Ambassador reiterated that the U.S. strongly opposed Russia's unilateral actions that sought to deny

Georgia part of its sovereign territory, and said we continued to press for a reduction in tensions on all sides prior to the August 8 anniversary. He noted that despite distortions in the press, U.S. military assistance to Georgia was focused on defense reform and modernization, with an emphasis on doctrine, interoperability with NATO and U.S. forces, English-language training, and preparing and equipping Georgian forces for participation in coalition operations, including in Afghanistan. Karasin expressed appreciation for the information on U.S. military assistance and said it would be useful if other senior USG officials would repeat this from time to time.

Central Asia

¶10. (C) Following up on U/S Burns' phone call debriefing on his Central Asia trip as promised during the Presidents' summit (reftel), Ambassador Beyrle drew from the reporting cables to provide additional, releasable information. Karasin expressed appreciation for both U/S Burns' and Ambassador Beyrle's information, noting that such openness helped prevent unnecessary competition between us in Central Asia. While Russia's and the U.S.'s interests in the region were "different," we should be more transparent and open with each other, Karasin posited. He added that the MFA would provide a read-out of Medvedev's trip at the end of the week to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, the latter for the CSTO summit. The trip would focus on economic cooperation, especially in hydroelectric energy.

Nagorno-Karabakh

¶11. (C) Karasin expressed concern at reports that "some in DC" were characterizing the 7/17 Moscow meeting of the Minsk Group and the Azeri and Armenian Presidents as not successful. While there was no great breakthrough, the two Presidents had started actively discussing the referendum (what to call it), agreed to continue discussing the issue, and had also agreed for the first time to let a policy planning team from the Greek-led OSCE high-level group visit

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the Lachin Corridor. The trip would take place in early August. Karasin also highlighted the fact that the Presidents agreed to meet again, possibly on Oct. 9. He stressed that Russia still considered the Minsk Group as the central negotiating group for NK. He also suggested looking at how to work in "the Turkish factor," as Turkey was playing a much more active role in the region. Moscow was discussing the issue with Ankara and believed it was going in the right direction, but the Minsk Group should use the period before the October meeting to look at it.

Ukraine

¶12. (C) Karasin said he hoped the visit of ROC Patriarch Kirill would help the extremist parties to calm down. Kirill's visit was a "religious one," although there were still contentious issues between the Russian and Ukrainian churches. He asked about the VP's trip, noting that his statements about Kiev's Euro-Atlantic aspirations seemed "well-balanced." Russia had a "complicated" relationship with Ukraine and it was good to know where the U.S. stood. Ambassador Beyrle dismissed the "myth in some quarters" that the U.S. had "ceded Georgia and Ukraine to Russia" in exchange for Moscow's help on Iran. He noted that while we did not yet have a full read-out on the VP's trip, we do not need to be competitors in the region and every U.S. delegation to Ukraine and Georgia should not be seen by Russia as competition.
BEYRLE